

INTERNATIONAL MORALITY  
AND  
JAPANESE NATIONALISM

✓ BY

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## *International Morality and Japanese Nationalism.*

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TO superficial observers of Japan, a view of Japan at present will lead to a pessimistic attitude concerning the international situation. It is very easy to count facts leading to pessimism, indeed far outnumbering the hopeful signs. For instance, the people of Japan in general seem ignorant and indifferent to international problems. The women's groups seem inactive. There seems a lack of interest among the educated people. The appropriations for the army, though slightly reduced, show nothing of the spirit of the Washington Conference in the reductions proposed. The militarists still seem to have a dominant influence on the policy of Japan, even though the old military leaders are dead, and we hoped that without leaders the party would lose its power! Especially discouraging is the recent trouble concerning the arms lost in Vladivostok. There are two views in Japan toward the question of the arms lost at Vladivostok. One view is based on international morality, and is a desire to make public all the evil that has been done, even at the expense of national prestige and advantage. The other is based on national interest only, and desire to conceal everything which is unfavorable to Japan, even at the expense of international morality. The latter attitude seems to have won out, as is shown by the decision of the Cabinet. With these facts in mind, it is easy to become pessimistic, but this is to fail to recognize other less apparent forces which are at work.

The hopeful facts may not be so numerous or so apparent, but they are just as important. I wish to get below the discouraging surface, and find the new light that is hidden from a superficial gaze. A snowstorm in the spring-time or a hot wave

in the autumn does not mean that the seasons will no more go their accustomed round. The law persists, and the seasons continue. So in the policies of nations there may be startling diversions from the general trend, but the national characteristics that influence the policies of nations continue, nevertheless, to work after their own way.

Since the Restoration in Japan one great national characteristic has shown itself constantly in all directions, that is, a great desire to be abreast of the leading nations of the world in all things in international policies as well as in other departments of life. Japan is quick to react to foreign opinion and to interpret the spirit of the time. She is glad to adopt policies that are clearly the ruling policies of the age. Japan does not wish to be isolated; she desires co-operation with other nations. This national characteristic was very much in evidence at the time of the Restoration sixty years ago. There was, indeed, a strong anti-foreign spirit at that time and a desire to continue the policy of the closed door; but the demand for an open door and intercourse with other nations was so strong that it was difficult to tell which party was really the stronger. Now as we look back on that time we see how strong the sentiment in favor of the open door really was, but in the chaos of that time it must have seemed to the casual observer that there was a great lack of understanding and of activity on the part of the Japanese people. The people were almost unconscious that the open door was becoming a reality. Even the anti-foreign statesmen who had control of the government came to demand commerce with other nations, so strongly did the sentiment for the open door influence the nation. The development of the idea was quiet and natural, perhaps because Japan, unlike China, had time to develop her national policy behind her sea wall before the pressure from the foreigner became too great. But that quiet and natural development of the idea of the open door was not unlike what is going on at the present time.

Since the Washington Conference again there have been two ideas working in the minds of the Japanese people. Again to the superficial observer the situation may seem simply one of chaos, and it is too early really to tell the effect of the Washington Con-

ference. But these two ideas are apparent. The first is the idea that the Washington Conference was simply a sort of business-like transaction, limiting various navies according to a certain agreement. It is blind to the spiritual meaning of the Washington Conference. But there are other people to whom the Washington Conference is first of all a spiritual movement. Which of these two views has now the ascendancy is for the future historian to decide. But if we judge from the past, we may suppose that these will act and react upon each other until they result in a single attitude and principle in accord with the thought of the age. Narrow nationalism demands that Japan shall keep abreast of the other nations and not be isolated or despised; a sense of international morality demands from a different point of view that Japan be one with the other nations of the world. So that both views point ultimately in the same direction.

There are two types of narrow nationalism in Japan, a radical type and a milder type. Both are really imperialism. The Sino-Japanese War thirty years ago really brought about the unification in the life of Japan, for the many factions that had existed since the Restoration united against the common enemy, China. At that time it was felt that international morality had no claim if it conflicted with national interest. The other nations, France, Russia and Germany, showed this by robbing Japan of what she felt to be her just rights as victor in the war, and by taking portions of China among themselves. At that time nationalism was easily identified with imperialism. Japanese soldiers, scholars and journalists began to imitate Germany, and Japanese political science was founded on the political science of the Germany of that time. It was Japan's purpose to develop her material resources and thereby secure a large army and navy. She felt that she was following world tendencies in this respect, and that to neglect the development of the army and navy was to die. Moreover, the strong feeling of hostility toward Russia for taking part in the interference at the end of Japan's war with China offered further excuse and stimulus to the militarists. Imperialism was in the air, both the imperialism which bases itself on economic and political reasons, and the imperialism which fostered unwarranted expansion; and militarism in Japan developed fast. Good or bad, it had its fruits. Japan's

territory was extended, and the militarists point to this as a glorious national achievement.

Imperialism and militarism reached their highest development in Germany at the time of the World War; but a new idea has now come to be prevalent in all nations, the idea which was expressed by the Washington Conference and by the League of Nations. Those who feel a strong sense of international morality feel that peace and justice are the thoughts of the new age. They think the militarists are very foolish to cling to the old idea of territorial expansion, and gaining commercial advantage by force of arms. They believe that international conferences should be respected even in the face of national interest, and that morality should apply to nations as well as to individuals.

These two ideas are prevalent in all departments of Japanese life. We see them clearly in the discussion of the army and navy budget, in the diverse policies of national defence, and especially in the case of the arms lost in Vladivostok. It will not be fruitless to examine some of the ideas relative to the lost arms, not only the two extremes of narrow nationalism and international morality, but also ideas between these two extremes.

The case is simple. Arms entrusted to the Japanese army in Vladivostok by the Czecho-Slovaks were lost. General Chan Tsao Lin received arms from somewhere. These two facts are known. This was first announced in a Japanese newspaper as an act contrary to the spirit of the Washington Conference. The newspaper went on to say that the whole thing must have been planned by the military authorities,—that was another example of the aggressive policy of the Japanese militarists, which is a great handicap to Japan in her dealing with foreign lands. In the end, however, none of the high officials took any responsibility for the matter. The blame was all put on a major in the Japanese army, who was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, unless by good behavior during the next three years he can clear himself. No satisfactory explanation has been given of the other end of the transaction, the receipt of the arms by Chang Tsao Lin. Nominally the case is closed; but it is not really settled. The Japanese people are not satisfied, and feel much sympathy for Major Hara, and especially for his wife, who committed suicide as



a sacrifice of herself for her husband's crime. There is no proof by which we can convict the militarists, but there is plenty of suspicion. Professor Yoshino, in *The Central Review*, answers the question: "What was the policy of the militarists in the act?" He supposes that their policy was first to help Chang Tsao Lin and to make him the central authority not only in Manchuria and Mongolia, but even as far as Peking, and if possible throughout China. Second, they wished in Siberia to help the Whites, the conservative reactionaries, and to suppress the Reds. From the point of view of Chang Tsao Lin and Russia, it was their hope to form a close connection between China and Russia, making an alliance, with a special understanding with Japan. The militarists think this is the best thing for Japan, and they will not give up their idea.

It seems strange that when the Japanese desire for better international understanding and for justice is now so strong the militarists should dare to do a thing like this against the strong wish of the people. The people of Japan will surely not suffer a thing so contrary to their ideas of international good will and to the peaceful economic development of the nation. It resolves itself into a question of the constitution of the government. If the militarists, who are so small an element numerically in Japanese life, have yet power to do something so contrary to the will of the people and so subversive of Japan's best interests, something must be done about it. If Japan is not to meet the fate of Germany, the people of Japan must put a stop to this double diplomacy. The best policy for the militarists is to secure the good will of the people, by frankly revealing the faults of the past and avoiding the same evils in the future.

Another point of view is that it would not be good to make the whole matter public. The authorities should try to keep the respect of the people in general by concealing everything disgraceful, but they should nevertheless, in secret, trace out the evil, and punish the guilty.

Others insist that anyone who uncovers such evils sacrifices the national honor and is an enemy of the country. To them national honor stands first. This has long been a dominant idea in Japan. But even these people, who would not uncover evils

when they have happened, would do their utmost to prevent their happening, and would join with others in wishing to abolish the system of double diplomacy. Even those who have come to believe in the new spirit of international morality as revealed by the Washington Conference have yet had so deeply ingrained in them by their national education the importance of preserving the national honor, that at a crisis like this they are not unlikely to take this attitude of urging concealment. The Japanese textbooks used in the public schools show ideas of imperialism and hero worship, and the teachers have long been imbued with militaristic ideas. One antidote for this is the press of to-day, which is full of the new and broader ideas. But if the teachers, especially in the country, do not read the newspapers, they are usually narrow nationalists. Japanese education has not always been so. But at the time of the Chino-Japanese War, and Russia's invasion of another nation, the soldier became naturally a prominent and heroic figure. The interference of the three European nations at the close of the Chino-Japanese War forced Japan into a policy of "Wait and endure." The imperialistic and militaristic tendencies which then found their way into Japanese education are an influence too strong to be counteracted by one Washington Conference with new ideas of peace and international justice.

Another movement, however, is helping the Washington Conference ideals to transform the older educational ideas of Japan. Since 1915 the National Government of Japan has given ¥10,000,000 annually to aid the educational system throughout the country, the rest of the funds for schools being raised locally. The expense of the educational system has been increasing year by year. In 1916 the total expense for education was ¥16,500,000, teachers' salaries besides being ¥37,500,000. The enrolment has increased 200,000 a year, and the expense of the educational system has increased to ¥180,000,000 in 1920, ¥140 000,000 for teachers' salaries. This is more than three times the amount in 1916. In the period between 1917 and 1920 the high price of rice made the country towns prosperous and enabled them to support their schools even after this large increase in expenditure. The fall of prices and the growing shortage of farm labour have brought about a very difficult



condition. Teachers were not paid the full amount of their salary, but a certain percentage, as ¥70 on ¥100. Therefore, many heads of villages and towns petitioned the National Government for a grant of at least ¥40,000,000 to aid education throughout the country. There is at present no hope of this being realized. Perhaps ¥20,000,000 will be granted, but that will not solve the problem. The only hope for more assistance to education from the national treasury is to economize in armaments. Therefore the very teachers who have been filling their pupils with imperialistic ideas are now ready to demand disarmament. Even for preparedness against war, education is necessary, and limitation of disarmament is now necessary to education. Even the most narrow nationalists can understand this reason. Others are open to the new, broader ideas, or at least realize that at the present stage of world civilization such large armaments are needless. Coincident with this movement among the public school teachers in Japan, there is a movement in higher educational circles to introduce broader ideas in the national educational system. By these and other influences the future education of Japan will undergo a marked change. The recent formation of an Association for International Education, with Dr. Sawayangi at its head, is a natural expression of these tendencies.

The same mental attitudes that showed themselves in regard to these problems are again evident in the discussion of the army and navy budgets. The total Government appropriations for last year were one billion and a half yen. If the reduction is 20%, next year's budget will be one billion and three hundred million yen. The total desired by the army and navy for the next year is ¥530,000,000, more than 40% of the total appropriation. No other nation since the World War appropriates 40% of its national expenditure for the army and navy. Why should Japan alone spend such a large proportion of her income for the army and navy, without paying any consideration to the condition of the neighboring countries? Does our international situation, or our international relations, require so great an expenditure for the defence of the country? Does not this great preparation of armaments invite a national crisis?

As to the naval appropriations, the spirit of the Washington Conference seems to be sincerely followed. But let us examine the army appropriations. According to the desires of the Parliament expressed last spring, the appropriation for the army is nearly ¥40,000,000 less than for last year. However, the proposal made in the Parliament at that time did not represent the mind of the people, who desire not only a reduction in expense, but in the actual strength of the army. It is planned to reduce expenditures for the army within the next ten years by ¥800,000,000. This calls for a reduction of the army, therefore, by 56,000 men and 10,000 horses. On the surface this seems the same as a reduction by five divisions. But the Minister of War has stated that the reduction as planned will not really reduce the strength of the army at all. This is a kind of reduction of armament, but it is entirely different in its nature from the reduction we have spoken of as in accordance with the spirit of the Washington Conference. The people demanded not an economy in expenditure, but a reduction of the present force. Major-General Kōno criticized the appropriation for the army. Of the 56,000 soldiers to be sacrificed, 34,000 had already become unnecessary because of the reconstruction of the infantry organization. This reduction, therefore, has nothing to do with disarmament. The remaining 22,000 are taken from the cavalry, artillery or other departments of the army. As a compensation for this loss better arms are provided.

It is very difficult to understand why the army men want to keep the present force. Preparedness is necessary if all other nations have the same force. The army authorities do not seem to understand the present situation. Again, one recognizes two opposing ideas. The people insist that half the present force is enough; the army authorities insist that no reduction can be made. From one point of view the world is strengthening its armaments. Militarists agree that though navies are being reduced, the same does not apply to armies. They say that the nations of the world are teaching military science in their colleges, and in America the flag is used everywhere for what is called "Americanization," but what they believe to be narrow nationalism. They insist that the conditions in Siberia and China present a continual danger to Japan.

In reality the argument that the present military force is necessary for the defence of the country is only an abstract theory. We can not expect them to follow easily the wishes of the people in reducing the army, for if they should really do this, they would lose their positions. They may say that they would make sacrifices for their country, but in practice they do not do so. Therefore, it is very difficult to bring about army reduction—more difficult than naval reduction,—as the army authorities have for so long wielded great influence. Again, the idea of national honor and prestige has great weight. According to the Constitution (Article 67), an appropriation once made for a department can not be altered in after years except by the approval of the Government. An army appropriation can, therefore, always be held up by the disapproval of the Minister of War, for if the other Ministers should attempt to pass the appropriation in spite of his disapproval, he can resign, and thus the Cabinet can be broken up. The same was true in regard to reduction of the navy in the spring of 1921, yet seven months later at the Washington Conference the 10-10-6 ratio was adopted, because the naval authorities came to understand the tendency of the world. If this can be done for the navy, it can be done for the army. The most narrow nationalists in Japan want to follow the world tendency, and if they can be convinced that the reduction of the army is in line with that tendency, they will be willing that the army be reduced.

The liberal-minded people of Japan are sometimes hindered by the narrow nationalism of other peoples, yet they are also stimulated by it. Even the most narrow nationalists of Japan are anxious to keep abreast of other nations, and will follow whatever they believe to be the world tendency, whether it be imperialism, or justice and goodwill. If another Washington Conference can decide upon reduction of the army, there is good reason for believing that Japan will be glad to follow.

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